

Event Report from Annette Dupuy, PPN Support Officer

Community Connects Conference

Kilkenny, 10th October 2018



Community Connect Regional Conference in Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny. A conference for the community, voluntary and charity sector.

Event Description

The conference was opened by John Paul Phelan, TD and Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government with special responsibility for Local Government and Electoral Reform. The Keynote Address was given by Mr John Farrelly, CEO of the Charities Regulatory Authority. Addresses were also given by Barry Symes of Community Finance Ireland, Katherine Peacock of Kilkenny PPN & David Millar of Compufile.

The event included education sessions, where participants went to three of nine Educational Sessions across the course of the day.

As in 2017 I found the conference very worthwhile – from the opportunity to network and chat to other participants and to engage with speakers who were very relevant to PPN organizations.

John Farrelly, CEO of the Charities Regulatory Authority presented a summary of the role of the Regulator which were;

- To regulate in the public interest
- To ensure compliance with the law
- To support best governance.

The aim of the organization is to have a vibrant trusted charity sector. He referenced the upcoming launch of the new Governance Code for Charities, due on 7th November, which will be based on proportionate, principles based 'comply or explain' basis. He referenced also upcoming Charity Trustee Week in November. Resources mentioned were the guides produced by the Charity Regulator and which are available on their website www.charitiesregulator.ie.

The Educational Sessions I attended were;

- Memo & Arts
- Leadership & Managing Change
- Effective Minute Taking

Memo & Arts

Description – Mr Sean Nolan, Clark Hill Solicitors. *Why do we need our governing document? How should we use it? What are the principal/core elements? How often should it be updated? How can we use it to become a more effective organisation. Examples of good practice.*

In this session Sean Nolan discussed the following:

- The constitution. This is the set of rules by which the organization operates. It is legally binding contract between the members and the organization and between the members. This document can be aspirational as well as legal and set the ethos for the organization. It is the most important document of the organization. Constitution in a charity organization still referred to as Memo & Arts.

The Charity Regulator has templates for model constitutions for both unincorporated associations and companies.

- Distinction between a company & an Unincorporated Association. Essentially a company is a separate legal entity, distinct from the members. It has rights, like a person and the contracts and obligations are the companies, as is the property. Unincorporated has no separate personality, the property is vested in trustees. Contracts are in the name of the association (effectively trustees). There is no limited liability – so the trustees/officers have personal liability. Indemnity is an absolute requirement!
- Companies Act 2014 was discussed and the requirements of a company.

While the session was very technical it highlighted the core difference of being a company vs unincorporated association. It also highlighted the importance of the Constitution and the need to keep it as a living document.

Leadership & Managing Change

Description - Carol Conway, Freelance Catalyst. Skills, insights and practical steps for improving effectiveness. Difficulties and challenges in managing and embracing change. Steps to recognise and realise your potential and how that can contribute to organisational success. What a successful organisation might look like.

This was an excellent presentation by a very energetic and engaging presenter.

In this presentation the focus was on being positive – paying attention to what is or could be rather than negative (paying attention to what is not there)

The presentation talked about how words trigger pictures, pictures trigger emotions/behaviours (e.g. the word rat, triggers a picture and for some triggers fear)

Bearing this in mind she discussed avoiding the words don't, can't and but.

- Don't - gives pictures of behaviours we don't want (e.g. don't go near the fire immediately makes you see the fire)
- Can't – gives up responsibility, removes possibility. (rephrase to I could...if... - as this provides possibility)
- But – adds a negative! (e.g. thanks for the report but did you consider....) – use 'and' instead as it is more positive (e.g. thanks for the report and did you consider....)

Need to have a vision, a shared vision – a picture of where you want to go.

Effective Minute Taking

Description - Ruairi Cosgrove. What you need to know to take accurate and relevant minutes. Who can and should take minutes? How agenda planning contributes to effective minute taking. Maintaining focus during meetings and recording the critical actions and decisions. (reference Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators - www.icsa.org.uk/ireland)

This session focused a little more on the Company Secretary role and therefore some elements were beyond most of our PPN Members. However, my key takeouts were:

- The minutes take at least as long to complete as the meeting does!
- Minute styles vary but once agreed this should be the committee style.
- Overall the key for the minutes is that it should be a record of decisions and reasons for decisions.
- Any roughwork or notes taken should be destroyed when minutes are drafted and approved.
- Avoid including personal details for members for GDPR reasons (e.g. congratulate on birth of baby)
- Good practice to record in and out in the minutes (e.g. Mr. Murphy joined the meeting)

End of report